2 WEN DAN AND ITS NEIGHBOURS:

THE CENTRAL MEKONG VALLEY IN THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH CENTURIES

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This chapter discusses the important political entities in the interior of mainland South-East Asia that were known to the Chinese during the seventh and eighth centuries. At the turn of the twentieth century, these and other South-East Asian historical sites were scarcely known to Western scholars, who were beginning to rediscover the toponyms buried in the Chinese annals of the Tang period (AD 618–907). Paul Pelliot, in his monumental 1904 article, repeatedly expressed hesitation as he tried to identify such place-names, and a careful reading of his work shows that he did not expect his conclusions to be definitive. Successive Western scholars, however, have simply accepted works such as those of George Coedès, which depended on the provisional conclusions of earlier twentieth-century sinologists such as Pelliot. Instead of doing so, scholars would have done better to review and reassess the tentative geographical identifications, perhaps once every few decades, in the light of new archaeological findings and ethno-linguistic research. In this regard, it can also be useful to re-examine abandoned theories.

The discussion below scrutinizes the vague but tantalizing geographical references in Chinese texts written more than a millenium ago and attempts to place them side by side with the archaeological discoveries of the past half century. In addition to

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This chapter is dedicated to Michel Ferlus.

textual analysis, the study ventures into the realm of linguistic analysis which, although highly speculative, may reveal valuable living links with the distant past and with long forgotten cultures.

TANG SOURCES AND TOPONYMS IN THE TEXTS

Numerous Chinese works of the Tang period have been preserved and contain valuable information for the study of mainland South-East Asia. Among them are the two major annals of that period, *Jiu Tang Shu* ('Old Tang Annals') and *Xin Tang Shu* ('New Tang Annals'); the geographies *Tai Ping Huan Yu Ji* (a geography of the Taiping reign period) and *Yuan He Jun Xian Tu Zhi* (a descriptive geography of the Yuanhe period, with details of prefectures and districts); the historical encyclopaedias *Tai Ping Yu Lan* (an encyclopaedia of the Taiping reign period), *Ce Fu Yuan Gui* (a basic source on pre-Sung government and political history) and *Tang Hui Yao* (a Tang dynasty reference source); and the hagiographies *Da Tang Xi Yu Qiu Fa Gong Song Zhuan* (biographies of Yi Jing and other monks) and Xuan Zhuang's *Da Tang Xi Yu Ji* (a diary of his journey to western lands during the Great Tang period). Additional sources for this period include the Vietnamese annals: *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (the complete annals of the Dai Viet) and *Viet Su Luoc* (an abridged history of the Viet). Each of these works provides brief but precious details about South-East Asia—occasionally only a few sentences and sometimes nothing more than place-names.

The long references to the 'southern barbarians' (*Nan Man*) in the new Tang annals first speak about Huan Wang (which was in present-day central Vietnam), Pan Pan (in present-day southern Thailand)[1] and Fu Nan, which was overcome by Zhen La, its former vassal state. The references to Nan Man can be classified by section and occupy the third part (part C) of volume (*juan*) 222 of the new Tang annals (*Xin Tang Shu*, cited hereafter as XTS 222C). The second half of the Zhen La section—which deals with Land Zhen La (*Lu Zhen La*), also known to the Chinese as Wen Dan—is of immense interest to us. South of Zhen La was the intriguing country of He Ling, which was known also by the names She Po and Du Po.

Next the new Tang annals mention the well-known Duo He Luo (Dvaravati, also known as Du He Luo). On its west, Duo He Luo was bounded by the sea, and its neighbours were Zhen La to the east, Jia Luo She Fu to the north and Pan Pan to the south.

The inhabitants of southern China may have played an intermediary rôle in reporting local names to the authorities in the capital of Tang China. There were many Chinese, Vietic and Daic dialects, and we can never be sure which groups were involved in sending such reports. Moreover, Tang Chinese officials must have differed somewhat from the indigenous South-East Asian peoples in their pronunciation of South-East Asian toponyms. Despite the millenium that separates us from them, it is still possible to attempt some comparisons, because Chinese historical linguists maintain that modern Cantonese has preserved the Tang-era pronunciation of Chinese.

The three Chinese characters for Dvaravati, for example, are transliterated from Mandarin (using the pinyin system of romanisation) as Duo He Luo. Transliterated from Cantonese, the same three characters can also be romanised as Doh Woh Loh or Duk Woh Loh. (Cantonese transliterations in this study are based on Wong's 1954 syllabary, with slight modifications.) In either Mandarin or Cantonese, we see that the Chinese tend to replace the South-East Asian *r* with an *l*, just as the Lao and Shan still do today.

In Cantonese, Hokkien and other dialects, there is another outstanding variation in which *l* is often interchanged with *n*.[2] The original pronunciation of Jia Luo She Fu, which is the name of the country to the north of Duo He Luo, could therefore be Jia Nuo She Fu (or some equivalent) in Mandarin. The Cantonese equivalents would be Goh Loh Fat or Ga Loh Fat.

Jia Luo She Fu (Śrī Canāśapūra)

In the same reference dealing with the central part of mainland South-East Asia, Jia Luo She Fu north of Dvaravati reappears and is further explained, but the Chinese authors wrote the name in a slightly different way: Ge Luo She Fen. This state had a common border with Dvaravati, on both its east and its south, which shows that Dvaravati's territory was large enough to wrap around two sides of Jia Luo She Fu, while also reaching the Gulf of Thailand to the west.

The fourth character in the name of Ge Luo She Fen is also found in the name of Xiu Luo Fen. The latter country, like Dvaravati, had Zhen La as a neighbour to its east. The final Chinese character in the names of these two countries (*fen* in Chinese, *bun* in Sino-Japanese) provides a clue to the original name that the South-East Asians adopted from Sanskrit. This character seems to correspond to the variants of the Sanskritic term *pūra* (meaning 'town' or 'city') that are used as suffixes to many South-East Asian town names. The variants *buri* and *bun*, for example, can still be discerned in modern town and province names such as Phetburi, Chanthaburi and Phetchabun, as well as in historical terms such as Si Khottabun, which is a Sanskritic name of the Lao kingdom. Given these considerations, the Chinese name Ge Luo She Fen must derive from a Sanskritic name, and a likely candidate is Śrī Canāśapūra.

An inscription dated AD 937 was found in Ayutthaya and published in a 1944 article by George Coedès. The inscription is written in both the Sanskrit and the Khmer scripts and lists the kings who ruled Śrī Canāśapūra. Another text (known as the Bo Ika inscription) was discovered in the extreme south-west corner of the Mekong basin at the site of Sima, west of modern Nakhòn Ratchasima. It describes a donation by a Śrī Canāśapūra king to a Buddhist monastery, and Coedès (*Inscriptions* 1954 vi: 83–5) thought it was written in the seventh century.

Dvaravati

The XTS account of Dvaravati (Duo He Luo) is poorly composed. The country's geographical position is described in terms of adjacent countries and of the five-month journey necessary to reach it from Guangzhou. The new Tang annals provide a detailed description of its two vassal states but none of Duo He Luo itself. The section next describes Duo Po Deng, which is mentioned in the previous section on He Ling together with Duo He Luo. The entries for He Ling and Duo He Luo should perhaps be regarded as a separate section, following the one on Zhen La. After the Duo Po Deng section, there is a long and detailed description of Tou He, a country with a name similiar to Duo He Luo and whose king's name was Tou He Luo

(the character *luo* very likely being identical to the *dvara* element in Dvaravati). The new Tang annals provide a full account of major countries. Duo He Luo is mentioned several times before and after this account of Tou He, and it is treated as a major country with vassal states.

Zhan Bo

The Chinese writers list the countries in a specific geographical order, beginning with those closest to China and proceeding to each successive, contiguous country in its turn. A few sentences that perplexed Pelliot are inserted in the annals between the account of Tou He and the accounts of Ge Luo She Fen, Xiu Luo Fen and Gan Bi, which were contiguous with Champa. Pelliot thought that the geographical position assigned to these sentences in the text was an editorial mistake and that they ought to appear in the section about India rather than the section about South-East Asia. The passage lists two different names—Zhan Bo[5] and Zhan Po—for a country that had a river called the 'Ganges' and was noted for the abundance of its wild elephants. The passage also provides information about various places in this area.

Significance of the Ganges

The new Tang annals place Zhan Bo (or Zhan Po) south of the Jiang Jiahe (Ging Gahoh in Cantonese), which is the Chinese name for the River Ganges in India. The description, however, does not correspond to the geography of India. On the other hand, the people who lived along the Mekong had, for centuries, received Indian legends through their Hindu and Buddhist religious activities. The toponym Champa Nakhòn, for example, has always been found in Lao literature, and this literature (in the Lao version of the Ramayana, for example) compares the Mekong with the Ganges. More convincing evidence for this argument could be provided by South-East Asian stone carvings depicting Indian myths. It is possible that, during the Tang era, the name 'Ganges' was used in reference to the Mekong—the biggest river in the heartland of South-East Asia—especially by Indians and by the most knowledgeable indigenous people.

Zhan Bo Tribute Mission in 656–61

Zhan Bo, which was south of the Mekong, sent tribute to the Chinese court during the Xian Qing reign (656–61) of Emperor Gao Zong. Tribute was sent also during this period by four other countries: (1) Po An (Poh Ngohn), (2) Qian Zhi Fu or Gan Zhi Fu (Tsin or Gohn Dzi Fat), (3) She Ba Ruo (Sae Bat Jae or Sae But Jae, although another Cantonese rendering of the character for *jae* is *joek*) and (4) Mo La (Moh Lap). The text conveys the impression that these five countries were confederated politically and economically and that they differed culturally from the coastal region dominated by Dvaravati.

The new Tang annals have more to say about Qian/Gan Zhi Fu (which probably had one of the South-East Asian toponyms with a *pura* or *buri* suffix, reflected in the Chinese character *fu*). This city was once a south Indian colony, and it was also known as Ban Zhi Ba (meaning 'Five Hills'). Pelliot hesitatingly identified the place as Kancipura (Conjeveram) in South India, which has a mountain with five peaks.

According to the Tang annals, the country north of Qian/Gan Zhi Fu was called Duo Mo Chang (Doh Moh Dzoeng), and it could be traversed in one month from east to west or twenty-five days from south to north. The ruler of this country had an army of 20,000 men, equipped with various kinds of weapons but no horses. East of Duo Mo Chang was Po Feng (Poh Fung); to the west was Duo Long (Doh Lung); and to the north was He Ling (Hoh Ling). From Duo Mo Chang, travellers could reach Jiaozhou (Gau Dzau), the Tang provincial capital in the Red River delta, by passing through Sa Lu (Sat Lou), Du He Lu (Dou Hoh Lou), Jun Na Lu (Gwan Na Lou) and Lin Yi (Lam Jap). Lin Yi is usually identified as the forerunner of Champa in modern-day central Vietnam.

He Ling: One Name Applied to Two Sites

Anyone attempting to identify these Tang Chinese place names has to accept that some of them designate more than one place. Among the limited examples of such usage are He Ling (Hoh Ling) and Du Po (Dou Poh), which some past historians supposed were Kalinga and the island of Java, respectively. Another point, as we have seen

above, is that Tang Chinese records tend to write the name of a single place in different ways, using different characters or shortened forms. One typical example is Dvaravati, for which the new Tang annals use four combinations of characters (1) Duo He Luo, (2) Du He Luo, (3) Tou He and (4) Duo Luo Bo Di.[4]

If the first-mentioned He Ling (south of Zhen La) is the same as the second-mentioned one (north of Duo Mo Chang), then Qian/Gan Zhi Fu must have been far away, at the southernmost extremity of Asia known to the Chinese at that time, because Dou Mo Chang was to the north of it. And it had to be one of four countries that looked north towards a 'Champa' that was south of a 'Ganges' when they sent tribute to China.

We cannot find a river large enough to be comparable with the Ganges in the islands of South-East Asia. Australia was not only unknown at that time but also unquestionably not Indianised. This point needs emphasis. Pelliot, Coedès and other distinguished scholars thought that the first-mentioned (southern) He Ling was on the island of Java, because Java was south of Zhen La and also because the Chinese were likely to use another name, Du Po, when they transcribed the name Java. Given that Java is south of Cambodia, then to fit the location described in the new Tang annals, 'Champa' (with the 'Ganges' River north of it) must have been in Australia! Obviously, such a line of reasoning leads to no conclusion.

He Ling: The Upper Mekong State

The first-mentioned (southern) He Ling must either have been Zhen La's immediate southern neighbour or a little farther south —although certainly not so far south as the archipelago beyond the South China Sea. (Its exact boundaries are not known, but it must have encompassed present-day southern Cambodia, extending as far west as Chanthaburi and east to Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island or probably even as far east as the lower Dong-nai River valley.) Given the relative geographical positions described in the annals, a second (northern) He Ling must have existed, probably in the northern part of the Mekong valley, in the area later known as Sipsòng Panna. Evidence for this view exists in the text of the new Tang annals itself.

Strangely enough, Pelliot mentions the evidence in his 1904 article. In his exhaustive search, he discovered another reference to He Ling in a biography of Wei Gao—a Tang Chinese hero who was an official in Yunnan and who, in alliance with the Tibetans, defeated the army of Nan Zhao. In 793 two of Wei's generals attacked and occupied a dozen enemy towns; as a result, eight chieftains of the West Mountain tribes came before Wei to pledge their allegiance. Each of the eight tribal lands is listed in the biography as a 'country' (*guo*), and the second one in the list was called He Ling. (The Chinese characters for this name are identical to those for the He Ling that was south of Zhen La.) This He Ling must be the one that was north of the broad territory known as Duo Mo Chang, which in turn was north of Qian/Gan Zhi Fu.

Qian/Gan Zhi Fu (Śrī Canāśapūra)

Qian/Gan Zhi Fu, as stated earlier, was formerly a city of south Indians. It was no longer an Indian colony, however, by the time that reports about it were sent to Tang-period China and by the time that its ruler (together with the rulers of the inland Champa and other countries) sent tribute to the Tang capital. Moreover, the description of Jia Luo She Fu (identified above as Śrī Canāśapūra) matches the new Tang annals account of Qian/Gan Zhi Fu in the notices concerning Dvaravati and the region that surrounded it.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ACROSS THE MAINLAND

At this point, it would be useful to review some of the archaeological sites of mainland South-East Asia, to show how the Chinese toponyms of the Tang-period texts might fit into the archaeological map and to consider what the texts may reveal to historians. The Chinese names for Dvaravati (such as Duo He Luo) in the new Tang annals and in other Tang records (such as the hagiography *Da Tang Xi Yu Ji*) seem to designate an area encompassing the Bang Pakong river valley, south-east of present-day Bangkok. Lopburi could have been within its sphere at one time, probably during the middle and late Tang period (see fig. 1 for the coastline of the Gulf at that time).

Fig. 1. Gulf Coastline of the Dvaravati Period, Seventh Century
Source: Compiled by Thiva Supajanya, 1987

Śrī Canāśapūra

The evidence indicates that Śrī Canāśapūra was an inland country and had neither a port nor access to the seacoast.[5] One of the two reports on this state places it to the north of Dvaravati, whereas the other report specifies that its eastern boundary was continguous with Dvaravati. We do not know when this territorial change took place, but a comparison of the Chinese descriptions reveals that, at some time between the dates of the two reports, Dvaravati expanded

towards the north-east, and it gained control of the area of modern-day Nakhòn Ratchasima and Chaiyaphum. As a result of Dvaravati's expansion, Śrī Canāśapūra relinquished control of the Nakhòn Ratchasima area, and its territory receded to the original core in the northern half of the Chao Phraya plain and the Sak River valley.

Qian/Gan Zhi Fu

Qian/Gan Zhi Fu must have been a settlement of south Indians in an inland place that was contiguous with the north-east region (Isan) of present-day Thailand, adjacent parts of the Mekong valley and Vietnam. Two very probable candidates are Lopburi and Sri Thep (Śrī Deva in the Sanskrit form). Qian/Gan Zhi Fu must initially have had strong ties with the home country in southern India, but at some point the ties were discontinued. It may be presumed that Dvaravati and Śrī Canāśapūra played a greater rôle in the process of making this settlement more South-East Asian in character than did the Khmer, who began their expansion in this direction in the tenth century. The inscription with the list of Śrī Canāśapūra kings is dated in the first half of the same century and contains Khmer vocabulary. Since the last entry in the new Tang annals is dated 907, the process must have taken place during the eighth and ninth centuries. Given the material evidence—the sacred hills at Sri Thep, the fact that the earliest Sanskrit inscriptions were written there, and the fine sculptures found in the vicinity of the town—Qian/Gan Zhi Fu could be a pre-Angkorian appellation for Sri Thep rather than for Lopburi. The name could have been used as an alternate in later centuries by descendants of coastal sailing Chinese or Malay seamen.[6]

Zhan Bo

Zhan Bo was in the middle Mekong basin and was apparently an important place. It is mentioned as the foremost among five states in this area, another of which was Qian/Gan Zhi Fu. It is also listed as one of the seventeen vassal states of Piao (the empire of the Pyu kings in present-day Burma) in the Piao section of the same volume of the annal. Zhan Bo was geographically between the two super-powers of the region and was therefore obliged to pay tribute to both.

In the same section of the annal, after the entry for Zhan Bo, there is a second toponym of interest to this study: Du Po. (The Chinese characters for this Du Po are identical to those for the Du Po identified as Java, but in this case the reference is to another of Piao's vassals.) Zhan Bo and Du Po were probably contiguous, because the two names appear one after the other in the list of the seventeen vassals. Moreover, they are listed in a separate entry, at the end of the list of Piao's vassals, as though Piao had no close relations with them. They were certainly separated from Piao by mountain ranges, and perhaps they sent tribute to Piao only on an irregular basis.

The state called Du Po was in contact with Chinese who probably resided in Yunnan, and the Chinese officials even knew that Piao was called Tu Li Zhuo (Tou Lei/Nei Dzyt) in the Du Po language. The new Tang annals also say that Piao was formerly known as Zhu Bo (Dzy Boh). One is tempted to say that the latter rendering of the name sounds more like 'Java' than Du Po does. Contrary to earlier theories, these 'Javas' were unquestionably not in the archipelago that constitutes modern Indonesia.

Drawing upon the discussion of the middle Mekong presented thus far, it would be helpful to identify possible sites of Zhan Bo and to determine the period of the Tang dynasty in which its rulers either were displaced from or abandoned their capital. The center of Zhan Bo was somewhere to the south of the Mekong. It may have been in the plain that extends along the Mekong from Loei to Nakhòn Phanom—the area that supported the much earlier Ban Chiang culture. Or possibly it was slightly to the south and lay on the other side of the Phu Phan range of mountains, in present-day central Isan.[7]

Zhan Bo's embassy to the Tang court, recorded in the new Tang annals during the 656–61 Xian Qing reign, coincided with an embassy in 655 from Ju Lou Mi (Koey Lau Mat), which is likewise recorded in the new Tang annals and also in *Tang Hui Yao* (THY 100). Ju Lou Mi was in the Champasak area. Six days to its northwest was Wen Dan.[8] The encyclopaedic dictionary (*Tang Hui Yao*) contains very valuable information, because its compilers preserved details that are not mentioned by the annalists. Pelliot used this

source often in his study, but he surprisingly dismissed the record of this particular embassy from Ju Lou Mi. He thought that Wen Dan did not yet exist in that year, although he did not explain how he reached that conclusion. He wrote: 'the reading "Wen-tan" ['Wen Dan' in the modern pinyin system] is surely a faulty one, and it should be read "Tan-tan".' According to his theory, the state that was six days from Wen Dan had to be in the Indonesian archipelago. Since he knew that such a location was impossible, his only recourse was to change the Tang text to suit his theory.

The two embassies, which are recorded in two different Tang sources, are the key to the generations-old problem of Wen Dan. Scholars who have considered this problem include Bastian (1866–71), Schlegel, Pelliot (1904), Lefèvre-Pontalis (1914), Maspero (1918), Seidenfaden (1922), Dupont (1943) and Sugimoto (1956).

United Zhen La and Dvaravati

As mentioned earlier, the description in the Zhen La section of the new Tang annals is of supreme interest, and it will be useful here to summarise the first part of this section. Zhen La was known by another name: Ji Mie (Gat Mit in Cantonese). At an earlier time, it was a vassal state of Fu Nan. Its western neighbours were vassals of Piao, or at least they sent tribute to Piao's rulers. On its north it was contiguous with Dao Ming (Dou Ming), and on its north-east it extended as far as the territory of Huanzhou (in the present day Vinh and Ha-tinh area of Vietnam). The people were on good terms with (and went often to) Piao and Can Ban (Sam Bun or Tsam Bun). The king of Zhen La, who possessed 5,000 war elephants, attacked and was attacked by Huan Wang (Champa)[9] and a second state: Qian Tuo Huan. The name of this second state corresponds exactly to the Tuo Huan (Nou Tuo Huan)[10] described in the new Tang annals as one of the vassal states of Dvaravati: pre-Khmer Lopburi.

According to the new Tang annals, many wars were fought between Zhen La and Lopburi during the Tang period. Some of these conflicts could have been connected with the wars between Lopburi and Hariphunchai, which are recorded in various Thai-language works, such as *Jinakalamalini*, *Munlasatsana* and *Cham-*

thewiwong. In Tang Chinese sources, Zhen La's wars with Huan Wang (the Champa that was in present-day central Vietnam) are mentioned first, and thus given more prominence than those with Qian Tuo Huan (Lopburi), which implies that the wars on Zhen La's eastern front were more frequent and graver than those on the western front. The invaders of the two states most probably used the Ai Lao (or Lao Bao) pass as an attack route. This fact is important for determining the exact location of Wen Dan in the seventh and eighth centuries.

Wen Dan could not have been in south Laos or in the southern part of Isan, especially in the latter half of the eighth century. An Angkorian inscription in Sanskrit, found at Baphuon and dated 790, says that Indrayudha (whose father was the Khmer king Jayavarman II) as a young man captured a king of Champa (Coedès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* 1964 vii, Baphuon inscription, K. 583). But which Champa does this inscription refer to? Was it the Champa in central Vietnam (Huan Wang), the one in southern Laos (Ju Lou Mi, formerly known as south Lin Yi) or the one in Isan (Zhan Bo)? Given our present knowledge, no identification can be made.

I have been following Pelliot and have agreed with him in identifying inland Champa with the Chinese Zhan Bo. But is it realistic to suppose that two countries with identical names existed in the same area and at the same time? Such nomenclature would seem to be impractical. Then why was Zhan Bo, which was south of the Mekong, called 'Champa' by the Chinese during the Tang period? It is conceivable that the name migrated with the people and that the Chinese applied the original name when referring to a new area where the migrants from Champa settled. The Chinese may then have assigned a different name to the original territory (now in central Vietnam) that was formerly known as Champa. Similarly, the inhabitants of Zhen La must have had a name of their own (other than 'Champa') for Zhan Bo.

Does the name Zhan Bo really refer to Champa? Nothing is absolutely certain in the reconstruction of ancient history. The opinion expressed here could be rejected, since it is not founded on sure evidence. Anyone who compares a map of the middle Mekong basin with one of the lower Ganges will be struck by a similarity:

the shapes of the great southward bends in both rivers are very similar. Given that the original Champa in ancient India was south-west of the great curve of the Ganges, did some Indians from north India discover this curve in the Mekong and therefore name the surrounding territory 'Champa'? If this is the case, we cannot use the same argument to explain why the coastal territory in present-day central Vietnam was called by the same name.

Tai Migrants to the Mekong

One major problem should not be neglected. Is it plausible to argue that Tai-speaking people migrated into the area of present-day Isan by the eighth century? If they were concentrated in a new Champa—in the valleys and flat lands of the middle Mekong—might they have advanced farther west to the Chao Phraya basin? It is probable that an early group of south-west Tai—perhaps Chamberlain's (1972 and 1991) Ph/B group—migrated from the southern part of Chinese-dominated Vietnam (Thanh-hoa and Nghe-tinh Provinces) and settled in the middle Mekong area during the fifth and sixth centuries. Over the course of several subsequent centuries, they could have spread across Isan and down into the Chao Phraya basin. This argument is supported by two assumptions. First, the earliest possible date for the westward migration of these Tai, whose language was tonal when they left Chinese-controlled Vietnam, seems to be the third century (Haudricourt 1972). Second, the history of Champa, as reported in Chinese and Vietnamese records, is difficult to understand unless one assumes that its northern part was inhabited by Tai-speaking peoples.

As an example, assuming that Śrī Canāśapūra was already Tai-dominated in the eighth century, since the earliest evidence about this state came from the Nakhòn Ratchasima region according to Coedès (*Inscriptions* 1954 vi: 83–5, Bo Ika inscription, K. 400), we might interpret history in the following manner: the Tai wanted to gain access to the Gulf (called Da Hai or Dai Hohi in the Chinese sources) by way of the Bang Pakong River, but they were barred along this route—initially by the Mon of Dvaravati and later by the expanding Khmer empire. They therefore moved west and settled in the Sak River valley and other lands north of coastal Dvaravati

(see fig. 1, which shows the approximate coastline of the Gulf during the Tang era).

Attention has already been drawn to the Duo He Luo section of the Chinese records, which attributes two different geographical positions to Jia Luo She Fu in relation to Duo He Luo. In one reference, Śrī Canāśapūra (Jia Luo She Fu) was in the southern part of Nan Hai (Nam Hohi), which this study identifies with the middle Mekong basin, in contrast to Xi Nan Hai (Sai Nam Hohi), which was in the Chao Phraya basin (where Qian/Gan Zhi Fu was located). This reference must have been drawn from an early Tang report that was collated with a later report saying that Ge Luo She Fen was west of Duo He Luo. The compilers of the Chinese annals were usually conscious of chronological differences between their sources, and they seem to have placed the oldest record of Dvara-vati's geographic position first in the text. Thus, when they provided a short history of events and the Chinese relationship with the country, the text would appear to be in perfect chronological order.

WEN DAN

Etymology of the Name

Another linguistic reason for supposing that Tai or early Daic speakers already inhabited Isan and the upper reaches of the Chao Phraya basin is the existence of toponyms such as Wen Dan, other 'Wen' (also transliterated as Mahn) and Can Ban.[11] These names provide very important clues concerning ethnicity. Wen Dan, once reconstructed in my experimental but not yet systematic way, is a simple Daic name: Man Sem (or Man Sham) meaning 'Siamese villages'.[12] The whole name that appears in the Chinese sources—Wen Dan *guo*—can therefore be translated literally as the 'land of Siamese villages'. Daic dialects that use the term *man* for 'village' are spread across an area in Yunnan and Burma that is a P dialect area, according to Chamberlain's (1972 and 1991) classification. But no P dialects are known today in the middle Mekong and Chao

Phraya plain, with the exception of the Müang (northern Thai) villages in north Laos. Is it not probable, given the textual and living evidence, that the middle Mekong was also a P area before receiving the Ph cultural-linguistic wave?

Wen Dan's Vassals: Dao Ming and Can Ban

Wen Dan had two vassals. The northern one was called Dao Ming by the Chinese. This name is possibly a Chinese rendering of the Tai term *thao müang*, which means a vassal prince or chief. According to the brief description that has survived, the inhabitants wore almost no clothing, went about nearly naked, lived by hunting, and had neither salt nor iron. Given our present knowledge of ancient salt and iron industries, this state must have been outside the Isan area. Dao Ming was in the northern part of the Mekong valley, straddling the watershed north of the Vientiane plain (which has a salt mine at Ban Bò). Although this scrap of information seems miniscule at first glance, it is very important. Salt and iron may have been important commodities produced in Wen Dan. The Chinese of every era of history had a great interest in identifying local products because of the commercial and political advantages that could be drawn from them. By advising officials to take no notice of Dao Ming, which had no products of value to the Chinese, the compilers of this report were probably drawing a comparison with Land Zhen La, whose trade was already known to be relatively valuable.

The north-western Wen Dan vassal was Can Ban.[13] Can Ban is explained twice in the context of its relationship to Zhen La. The early Chinese references indicate that this state had frequent contacts and was on good terms with united Zhen La. In 625 and again in 628, Can Ban apparently sent tribute, which arrived in China simultaneous with tribute from united Zhen La (see the encyclopaedia *Ce Fu Yuan Gui* 970: 5–6 and Song edition, pp. 3–4). Another thirty years passed, however, before the Tang court received the first tribute mission from Wen Dan. By the time of the later references, Can Ban had become a vassal of Land Zhen La—that is, Wen Dan.

What happened in the interim between the dates reflected in

these references? The new overlord was known to the Chinese as both Land Zhen La and Wen Dan. Its capital was known to the Chinese as Po Lou, which is apparently a Chinese rendering of the Sanskritic term *pura*, meaning 'city'. Po Lou's growth was rapid. During the years 705–7 it separated from the lower part of Zhen La and became an independent state. Was the embassy that it sent in the second half of the 650s an assertion of its independence? In any case, China responded favourably.

The site of Can Ban, which is described in the new Tang annals as north-west of Wen Dan, can be identified with some certainty. It is mentioned as one of two states that were the most friendly to, and made the most frequent contacts with, Zhen La throughout the Tang period, both before and after Zhen La split into at least two (and probably more) states around 705–7. Can Ban could not have been in the north of present-day Thailand, although Tai settlements may already have existed in these northern valleys in the eighth century. It must have been slightly to the south, in the central plain region. It must also have been friendly with Indianised, united Zhen La from the time of King Mahendravarman, who is known for his inscriptions north of the Dong Rak range and is cited in the annals of the Sui dynasty (581–618) as the first king of Zhen La.[14]

The second of the most friendly states was Piao. Piao was farther from Zhen La than was Can Ban. It was also powerful enough to force all of the states west of Zhen La to become its vassals or tribute-paying neighbours. The records mention Can Ban before they mention Piao. The order of the names in the records and the political relationships are understandable, if the following assumptions are made about Wen Dan. First, it was a landlocked state in present-day Isan. Second, it was an expanding power. And third, it was seeking access to a seaport, but was blocked because Dvaravati controlled the south-west corner of Isan—that is, the area of modern Nakhòn Ratchasima, which dominated the trails leading across the mountains and down to the rivers that flow into the Gulf.

Given all these assumptions and qualifications, the most likely site for Can Ban would appear to be Sri Thep. This site, however, is south-south-west of Fa Daet (the likely central-Isan site of Wen Dan's capital), whereas the records specify that Can Ban lay to the north-west.

Therefore, the administrative seat of Can Ban may have been a local communications hub, although not a place of great political or commercial importance, farther up in the Sak River valley.

The encyclopaedia *Ce Fu Yuan Gui* (957), which is dated 1013, indicates that Can Ban was more than 1,000 *li* (more than 500 kilometres) south-west of Land Zhen La. It was close to the Gulf, and the site of the town was swampy. If this record describes Can Ban in the ninth and tenth centuries, the administrative seat must have moved by this time to a new site, which most likely was Suphanburi.

FEDERATION OF TOWNS HEADED BY ZHAN BO, THEIR SITES AND EMBASSY TO CHINA

Sri Thep was friendly to, and perhaps an ally of, Zhan Bo, the state that led the embassy to Chang-an (modern Xian), the capital of China, during the 656–61 reign. This embassy was epoch-making because Qian/Gan Zhi Fu (the old Indianised state) and three other states were, by this time, politically federated with inland Zhan Bo. The whole group appears to have been a chain of new states. Their federation resembles the short-lived relationships of princes and chiefs in the chain of states mentioned more than 500 years later in the Ram Khamhaeng inscription, although the chain headed by Zhan Bo consisted of only five little states.

Could Qian/Gan Zhi Fu be Śrī Canāśapūra, whose territory extended as far as Nakhòn Ratchasima in the seventh century? An affirmative answer to this question is given by Dhida Saraya (1985).

Among the other three states of the federation, She Ba Ruo is mentioned in the encyclopaedia immediately after Qian/Gan Zhi Fu, which suggests that it was south of Sri Thep. Po An seems to have been geographically closest to Zhan Bo.[15] The name of the fifth state, Mo La, resembles the name Mloi, which was previously used by the Vietnamese in reference to the Cham. If the ancient name has been perpetuated in the name Mloi, then Mo La could have been a Cham seaport town that served the trade lanes of the South China Sea. If this theory is correct, the tribute-bearers from

the five federated states could have boarded Austronesian ships at the Cham port and sailed north to the coast of China. They would then have proceeded inland to the Chinese capital, Chang-an, which is on a tributary of the Yellow River.

IDENTIFICATION OF SITES

Zhan Bo in Isan

Zhan Bo was most probably in the central part of Isan, south of the Phu Phan range. According to the description in the Chinese, Zhan Bo 'extended [the verb here is *ju*] towards the north for some distance up to the Ganges'. Since it is clear that Zhan Bo was not on the Mekong itself, why then was it also called Champa? Did it have an Indianised city name at all? One possible explanation has been offered by researchers at the Cham research center in Phan-rang. That is, the name Champa may have been adopted from the name of a flower beloved everywhere in South-East Asia: the plumeria (known in India as *frangipani*). In this and many other cases, the argument about the origin of the toponym has to be de-Indianised, except where city names with the suffix *pura* (and its South-East Asian equivalents) are concerned.

Ju Lou Mi in the Region of Ubon and Stung Treng

The toponym Ju Lou Mi poses one such problem that can be solved with ease if it is de-Indianised. At the end of the long and important section on Huan Wang (Champa) in the new Tang annals, it is said that Ju Lou Mi (Koey Lau Mat) was in the south-eastern part of Nan Hai. It was therefore in the middle-Mekong area that roughly encompasses present-day Ubon, Champasak and Stung Treng, and perhaps as far down-river as Kracheh. From Huan Wang, this state could be reached by water routes within a month.[16]

According to the Tang-period Chinese geography, an additional six-day journey in a north-west direction was required to go from Ju Lou Mi to Wen Dan—or more precisely, to the administrative centre of Wen Dan.[17] We do not know the site of Ju Lou Mi's administrative centre or the extent of its territory. But, given that it

straddled the Mekong, above and below the confluent of the Mun, we can imagine a journey of six days beginning along this stretch of the Mekong—a journey that would terminate somewhere in the present-day provinces of Ròi Et, Maha Sarakham or Kalasin. In the area where the boundaries of these three provinces meet, three important archaeological sites have been investigated: Fa Daet, Kanthara Wichai and Nakhòn Champa Sri.

I have visited these sites several times, in an effort to determine whether they correspond to the Chinese toponyms. A clue to the identification of exact sites is provided in the Chinese observation that Land Zhen La had two capitals: an outer city and an inner city.

A system of two capitals is not a rarity in the early Tai or even the later Lao and Thai kingdoms. Luang Prabang, for example, was known by an old double name: Siang Dong and Siang Thòng. The Sukhothai kingdom had a second capital at Sri Satchanalai. In the Lan Na kingdom, King Mangrai lived in Wiang Khumkan (a village between Chiang Mai and Lamphun), even after he built his large, fortified and moated capital at Chiang Mai. Vientiane, another fortified and moated capital, was similarly paired with a tiny village: Wiang Kham on the Ngum River. Lopburi and Ayutthaya likewise were paired capitals.

Chinese sources provide evidence of this dual-capital system as early as the seventh century. The historical encyclopaedia *Ce Fu Yuan Gui* states that in 657 'Zhan *guo* Bo *guo*' sent a tribute mission to China (CFYG 970: 15 and Song edition, p. 9). At a later time, Zhan Bo was regarded as a single entity, but this reference clearly means two places: Zhan and Bo. The way this name is written in the Chinese encyclopaedia—with *guo* in each instance meaning a 'state' or 'kingdom'—is probably not a printing mistake. Instead, it probably refers to two different administrative centres. This record reflects the dual-capital system that evolved into a group of royal cities in an area governed by a single ruling family. Wen Dan seems to be an early example of this tradition. Given these considerations, a tentative match can be made between the textual and the archaeological evidence.

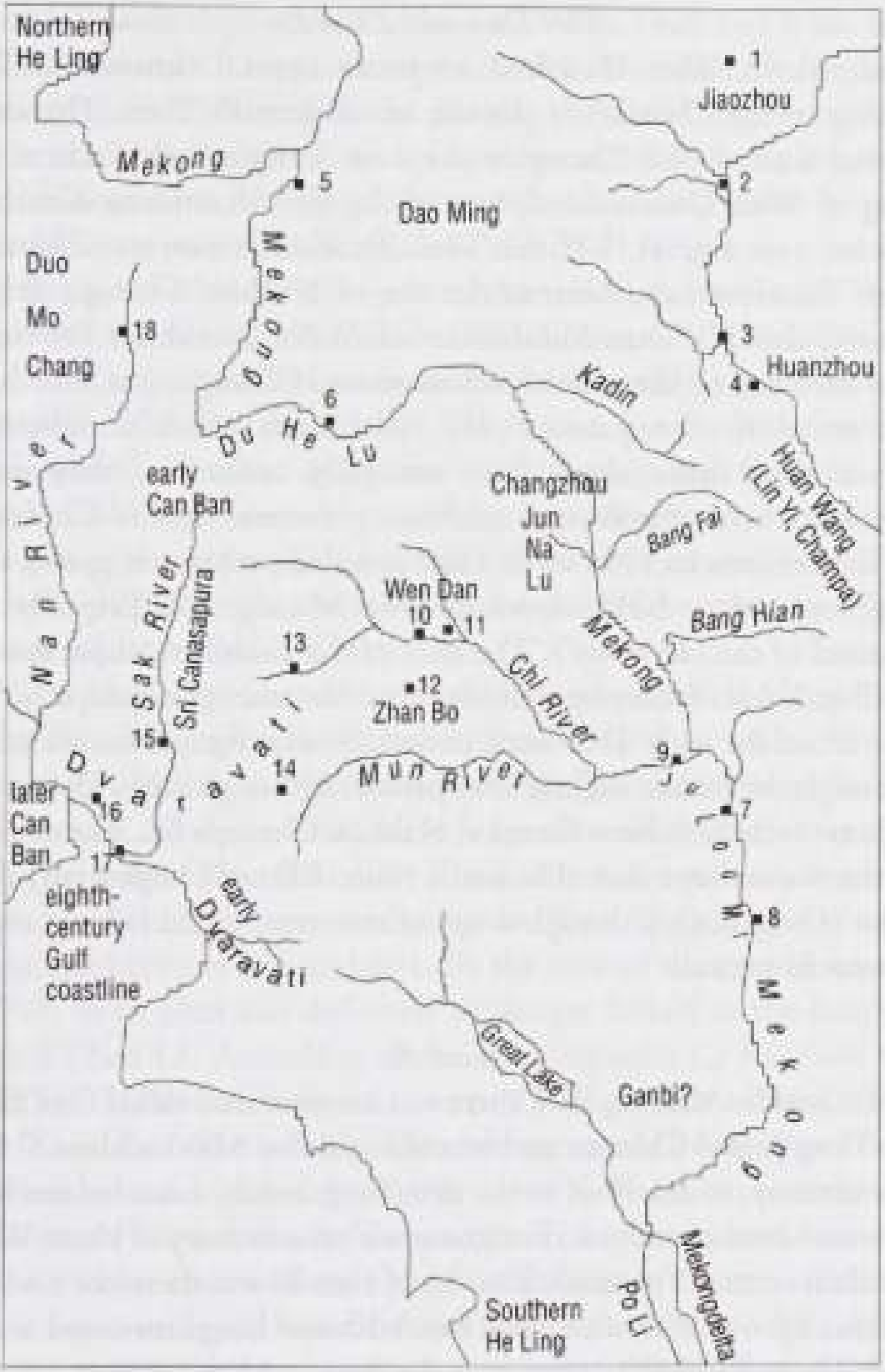

Fig. 2. The Central Mekong Basin in the Eighth Century: Theoretical Political Divisions

Key to Present-Day Sites: 1. Hanoi, 2. Thanh Hoa, 3. Vinh, 4. Ha Tinh, 5. Luang Prabang, 6. Vientiane, 7. Champasak, 8. Stung Treng, 9. Ubon, 10. Kanthara Wichai, 11. Fa Daet, 12. Nakhòn Champa Sri, 13. Chaiyaphum, 14. Nakhòn Ratchasima, 15. Sri Thep, 16. Lop Buri, 17. Saraburi, 18. Nan

Wen Dan and Zhan Bo

Most likely, Wen Dan had an outer capital (known as Wai Cheng to the Chinese) at the site of modern Fa Daet. The inner capital (called Nei Cheng in the new Tang annals), where the king of Wen Dan resided, was at the site of modern Kanthara Wichai (see fig. 2).[18] If this identification is correct, Zhan Bo must therefore have been at the site of Nakhòn Champa Sri, in present-day Na Dun Subdistrict of Maha Sarakham Province. The memory of the state's ancient name, Champa, has thus been preserved to the present day. Although these conclusions concerning these three sites are only tentative, they seem consistent with the textual evidence preserved by the Chinese.

Excavations in 1991 at Fa Daet revealed prehistoric graves on a large mound or hill, known as Dòn Müang Kao (literally the 'mound of the old town'). The base of the Buddhist stupa, known as That Yakhu (and popularly as That Yai, the 'great stupa'), may date from the early Dvaravati period. Stucco figures found at the site might be from a slightly later period. Although some Dvaravati-style artifacts have been found at Nakhòn Champa Sri, it is obvious to the trained eye that this site is more Khmer (Angkorian) than Mon (Dvaravati), although some of the moat could belong to the Dvaravati period.

Gan Bi

In the middle Mekong area, there was another state called Gan Bi by the Tang-period Chinese, and it could mobilise 5,000 soldiers.[19] Gan Bi's territory, as described in the new Tang annals, extended eastward for some distance and was contiguous with the territory of Huan Wang (modern central Vietnam). The site of Gan Bi was therefore north of Ju Lou Mi—the 'down-river' (*krom*) Khmer kingdom—and it was probably in the vicinity of present-day Savannakhet.

TRIBUTE MISSIONS TO CHINA

An entry in a Tang-period dictionary (*Tang Hui Yao* 100) states that Ju Lou Mi sent tribute to the Tang court in the year 655. Ju

Lou Mi was six days to the south-east of Wen Dan, and it has been identified as the Champasak region, in the vicinity of the confluent of the Mun and Mekong Rivers. During the Xian Qing reign (656–61), a number of other missions from the central Mekong arrived in the Chinese capital bearing tribute. After the first mission from Ju Lou Mi was received in 655, the Tang court welcomed a second, and larger, one from the same area. A mission arrived in 657 from Zhan Bo, the site of which is identified above as Nakhòn Champa Sri. It led a group of others from Po An (possibly modern Phon), Qian/Gan Zhi Fu (modern Sri Thep) and She Ba Ruo (modern Suphanburi). The last delegation in this group was from Mo La, which could have been either a Malay or a Mon town. In receiving this group of envoys, the Tang rulers must have acknow-ledged the leadership of Zhan Bo, which had two chiefs who must have been connected by some family tie.

Wen Dan was a late-comer to the tribute system, in comparison with other tribute-sending states in South-East Asia, which had the advantage of being as much as several hundred kilometres closer to the seacoast. (Only one state—He Ling, also called Du Po—entered the system after Wen Dan did.) The first mission was sent from the Wen Dan/Zhan Bo region during the Xian Qing reign—that is, sometime between 656 and 661. By the time of the second mission in 717, Wen Dan was definitely no longer linked to the formerly united Zhen La. According to the encyclopaedia *Ce Fu Yuan Gui* (CFYG 971: 2 and Song edition, p. 1), Zhen La's tribute in 717 was received simultaneously with, but separately from, Wen Dan's.

In the second half of the eighth century, Wen Dan sent three or four tribute missions to the Tang court. Tribute may have been sent in the 750s to commemorate the first mission to China, which had arrived a century earlier. Both of these missions brought rhinoceroses to the Chinese court. A striking parallel is found in the records concerning Zhen La, which likewise sent two missions, roughly a century apart, each bearing rhinoceroses along with other items of tribute. According to the new Tang annals, tribute was received in 657 from Zhan Bo and the four countries to its west. Another source (CFYG 970: 15 and Song edition, p. 9) specifies that the envoys from 'Zhan *guo* Bo *guo*' presented elephants and

rhinoceroses to the emperor in the same year of the Xian Qing reign (656–661). Nearly a century later, in 750, a tribute mission (probably from Zhen La) is recorded in the historical encyclopaedia *Ce Fu Yuan Gui*, and it, too, brought one or two rhinoceroses.[20]

The independence movement in upper Zhen La is mentioned above because, a half-century after the 656–661 tribute missions took place, Zhen La (which conquered Fu Nan in 627–634) split into at least two states, known as Land (*lu*) Zhen La and Water (*shui*) Zhen La. The original state may even have disintegrated into many small autonomous states. There would seem to be more reasons behind the rush of tribute-bearing missions during 656–661 than just a movement inside the old Zhen La state.

On the other hand, permanent large-scale 'united Zhen La' sites are not well confirmed in the southern part of Isan, not even in the places where small stone inscriptions, carved lintels and other sculptures have been discovered. The rulers of the northern Zhen La area may have pledged their allegiance to a king of united Zhen La, while simultaneously sending tribute to China independently, perhaps simply for commercial gain. Such an allegiance was a personal promise made by one ruler to his suzerain. Once the suzerain died, however, the ruler who made the promise was under no obligation to extend the promise automatically to the suzerain's successor.

A CHINESE PREFECTURE ON THE MEKONG: CHANGZHOU (TANGZHOU)

At this point, it would be useful to take another approach and examine the middle Mekong from the viewpoint of Huanzhou (Fun Dzau in Cantonese, Hoan-chau in Vietnamese). Pelliot (1904) thought that this place was in Ha-tinh, but Chinese scholars have subsequently identified it with Vinh (Tan 1982, vol. 5, pp. 72–73; Jing 1985).[21] For the purpose of the present study, it will suffice to suppose that Huanzhou was in either Vinh or Ha-tinh.

In the Tang-period Chinese administrative system, a prefecture was called a *zhou*. Chang (or Tang) Prefecture (Changzhou or

Tangzhou, depending on the Chinese character used by the writer)[22] was one of the Chinese administrative centres in the Mekong valley during the Tang period. One of its districts (*xian*) was Ri Luo, and Tang records show that this prefecture had a special status in the administrative system. In the seventh and eighth centuries, it seems that it was not dependent on Huanzhou, the larger prefecture that was immediately to its east. Instead, it was a prefecture under the direct control of the provincial government (*du hu fu*) at Jiaozhou (present-day Hanoi). As late as 791, Huanzhou became the provincial government that was in charge of the minor prefectures and districts inhabited primarily by non-Chinese (XTS 222C). Only after this date would Chang (or Tang) Prefecture have been given the status of a minor prefecture under Huanzhou. This date is of interest because, seven years later, Wen Dan sent its last tribute on record to the Tang court, and the prefectural name never again appears in the historical records. In fact, it is not known when Chang (or Tang) Prefecture was established under the Chinese prefectural system or when it ceased to be a prefecture.[23]

Chang (or Tang) Prefecture had only two districts—an arrangement that was not uncommon in Tang-period Vietnam. The journey from the first district to the second one (Wen Yang, or Mahn Joeng in Cantonese) took only three days. The name of the second district, when compared with the name 'Chang' (or 'Tang'), has a very Daic ring to it. Three place names are recorded along the route to the second district. To reach Wen Yang, a traveller went along Lou Lun River[24] and across the mountain Shi Mi of Gu Lang Dong. The river in question must be a tributary of the Mekong and must flow down from the cordillera. Gu Lang Dong is almost certainly the name of a Tai state, but the elements of the name have been arranged in Sinitic order. The names given by the Chinese to states in Vietnam and China likewise end with the term *dong*, which is used in many languages across the region in the sense of a 'country'.[25]

In the seventh and eighth centuries, the inhabitants of Chang (or Tang) Prefecture on the Mekong must have included many Tang Chinese officials, as well as their clients who were recent immigrants from Chinese-controlled Vietnam. These clients could

have been ethnically identical to the people of Śrī Canāśapūra and Gan Bi, whose language they must have spoken. They may also have had friends and relatives in the chain of towns to the west and to the east, which would have enabled them to co-operate in many ways with the Chinese.

Modern Chinese scholars attempt to place Changzhou (or Tangzhou), the seat of the prefecture, in the area between modern Kham Koet and Pak San. Contrary to their opinion, the prefectural centre was either on the Mekong (in the vicinity of modern Tha Khaek and Nakhòn Phanom) or at Sakon Nakhòn—a site that had a Chinese-type city plan. Wen Yang District was on the Mekong and could have been in the vicinity of present-day Tha Khaek. Such a site, across the river from Nakhòn Phanom, is plausible because in ancient times the seat of the Nakhòn Phanom administration was on the left bank—a fact that is still remembered by the older generation in Laos. The old Si Khotthabun stupa in Tha Khaek provides additional evidence to support this theory.[26] Further confirmation is needed, however, and it can possibly be provided by future archaeological research along this stretch of the Mekong.

ROUTES ACROSS THE CENTRAL MEKONG BASIN

Lopburi is at the western end of a route that leads across the middle Mekong region and continues beyond the mountains to the South China Sea. This route was apparently preferred by some, if not the majority of, travellers who traversed the region between Lopburi and the eastern terminus of the route. The importance of the route can be inferred from the great number of archaeological sites and artifacts discovered along it in modern-day Isan. This evidence indicates that people were travelling and moving in various directions across this region, from prehistoric times to Tang times, and certainly between the seventh century and the beginning of the tenth century.

Trans-Cordillera Trail

Towards the end of the seven-volume geography, the new Tang annals (43C) provide a description of the route leading through Laos

to the Wen Dan capitals. This is the best extant description of the route that crossed the cordillera. Unfortunately, the original Tang geography, which was used by the editors of the new Tang annals, has been lost.

According to the new Tang annals, a traveller setting out from Huanzhou went three days in a south-westerly direction, before crossing a mountain called Wu Wen (Mou Wan in Cantonese and Vu On in Vietnamese).[27] Two days farther along the route, he arrived at Ri Luo (Jat Lohk or Jat Lai in Cantonese, Nhat Lac in Vietnamese). The text gives no indication that the traveller had to change the general direction of his journey before reaching his destination. The overall direction and the distances travelled match the three historical sites in the centre of Isan that have been discussed above.

A Tang-period traveller, leaving the vicinity of present-day Vinh and going south-west, had a choice of several trails that crossed the cordillera. The northernmost is the Kaeo Nüa pass, which leads to Na Pae, immediately west of the watershed line. A traveller leaving Ha-tinh and going in the same direction towards some point in the central part of Isan had to cross the pass known as Muya (Mugia in French orthography). In the case of Muya, the direction of the journey from Ha-tinh is not south-west but south-south-west. This slight detour to the south to reach the Muya pass did not matter very much to early travellers, because the trail from the pass down to the Mekong runs almost due west. Chinese descriptions of such a route, however, did have to be precise. The directions for the initial part of a long journey are usually exact in a geographical description of the type contained in the Tang records. For this reason, it seems probable that the route began in Vinh rather than Ha-tinh.

From Huanzhou, it took about eight days to reach a Tai town on the right bank of the Mekong, probably near the site of modern Nakhòn Phanom. The traveller following the itinerary described in the new Tang annals most probably took boats along stretches of several rivers: the Nam Theun, the Nam Hinbun (with its tributary, the Nam Hai) and the Mekong, passing by an area lined with limestone formations. The Chinese writers described these limestone hills, which they called Shi Mi Shan, meaning 'rock-packed mountains'. The traveller then proceeded along the Mekong as far

as a landing known as Man Yang. This was the main route towards Wen Dan.

Either the same route, or a slightly modified one, could have been used by the rulers and high officials of Wen Dan, who carried costly goods as tribute when travelling east across the cordillera. They also brought many tame elephants, and for these animals in particular, the route would have been different, since elephants could not have been carried in river boats. The waterways, which offered leisurely and rapid down-river transport, would probably have been skirted when travelling in the opposite direction with large animals such as elephants. The itinerary of a tribute mission setting out for China would, therefore, have been slightly more time-consuming than the route that travellers took when going from the cordillera down to the Mekong.

Trail from the Mekong to Wen Dan

To go from the Mekong to the capital of Wen Dan, travellers landed on the right bank of the Mekong and proceeded south-west towards the Phu Phan mountain range, following the course of a river known to the Chinese as Li Li Jiang.[28] The boat trip down the Mekong was rapid and refreshing, but during the segment of the journey from Wen Yang (on the bank of the Mekong) to the capital of Wen Dan (in central Isan), travellers experienced a complete change of conditions. The overland part of the journey was hot and tiring, even during the cool season. For this reason, they most likely crossed the forested Phu Phan mountains in a single day and then took the shortest route to a district (*xian*) known to the Chinese as Suan Tai,[29] which was in Wen Dan's territory.

This segment of the journey took four days. The first three were spent crossing the flat plain in the area south-west of the marsh known today as Nòng Han Luang, which lies along the eastern approach to the Phu Phan range. The fourth day was spent crossing the mountain itself, before enjoying the more pleasant continuation by river to present-day Khao Wong Subdistrict, north of Kutchi Narai District.[30]

The three days reported in the Chinese geography for the next segment of the journey, ending at Wen Dan, are precisely the time

required to go from Khao Wong to Fa Daet. Anyone who had to present himself on official business at Kanthara Wichai (the ruler's residence) needed only one additional day to go there from Fa Daet. Thus the details of the itinerary, which have been preserved in the new Tang annals and in the geography *Tai Ping Huan Yu Ji*, coincide perfectly with a journey on foot and by boat from Vinh to Fa Daet and Kanthara Wichai.

Trans-Mekong Trade

Trade routes in the middle Mekong date from prehistoric times, and trans-Mekong commercial traffic was by no means new in the seventh century. The volume of trade seems to have increased dramatically during the Tang era, as the identifications in this study of Tang place-names suggest or confirm. The trade that flowed along the trans-Mekong route, from the seacoasts at both ends of the route, must have enriched a place that occupied a position not only along the route but also at the crossroads of other routes. There is not yet enough evidence to show when the trade along this route became active enough to give rise to a commercial hub such as Wen Dan. It could have become important during the Tang era, or it may already have been flourishing during a previous dynasty.

WEN DAN'S TAI POPULACE, WARRIORS AND RÔLE IN THE NAN ZHAO CAMPAIGN

Thus far, this study has established some basic geographical limits to the Wen Dan region and has pinpointed three historic sites as major settlements in Wen Dan's territory. Tang sources tell us more about Wen Dan and about other towns on the Mekong.

The Chinese text includes both a Chinese rendering of the title of Wen Dan's king and a royal title that sounds entirely Tai. This evidence tends to support the hypothesis that Tai-speaking people inhabited the area and were migrating across it during the Tang era. In the 'down-river' Khmer kingdom, which was in the territory that became the modern kingdom of Champasak, the majority of the people were probably not yet Tai at this time. But Gan Bi, with its

military organization, could have been a Tai-dominated state—like Śrī Canāśapūra (in the Sak River basin) and Xiu Luo Fen (a state west of Zhen La), each of which had 20,000 warriors. The new Tang annals group these three political entities in a single category and indicate that the customs of each resembled those of the others. For example, they all had fortifications. Fa Daet was the largest fortified site of its kind. It was surrounded by an extensive flat plain that could be irrigated, and consequently it had the agricultural potential to support a relatively large population of rice-growing farmers.

Such farmers were typical Tai men, enjoyed a respected position in society and served as soldiers whenever needed. The laws of King Mangrai, which date from the thirteenth century in Lan Na, affirm that a state (or a town within a state) could not be sustained without a corps of such men. As the text reveals, moreover, what the Chinese of the Tang period wanted most from Wen Dan in the second half of the eighth century was no longer commodities such as rare birds and animals. Instead, China needed soldiers to fight in Yunnan against the Nan Zhao kingdom.

Tai Involvement in Mon-Khmer Relations

Sino-Tai relations in the eighth century can be better understood by scrutinising some additional Chinese texts. The lengthy Pelliot (1904) study pointed out that Can Ban (identified in the present study as north of Sri Thep) is mentioned in the annals of the Sui dynasty, which immediately preceded the Tang period. Tuo Huan also is mentioned in this source and is now well known as Qian Tou Huan (ancient Lavo or Lopburi). The Sui dynasty lasted only four decades, from 581 to 618, but the Chinese government at the time was as well informed about South-East Asia as its Tang successors. The Sui annals (*Sui Shu*) say that, during the Sui era, Zhen La was very friendly with Can Ban (in the upper central plain of modern Thailand) and with a country known as Zhu Jiang (possibly an old name for the Pyu empire)[51] but that it was constantly at war with Lin Yi (Champa) and Tuo Huan (Lavo). Since Zhen La's ally in the Sak River valley was separated from Lavo by a bare 100 kilometres, this Mon-Khmer rivalry was possibly supported by the Tai of Sri Thep and may have continued well into the Tang era.

Tai Military Organisation

With these facts in mind, it would be useful to consider both the Khmer and the Mon needs for military recruits. The Tai, whose language was tonal, were comparatively new to the area and perhaps could take sides with any patron who was willing to reward them. They were a migrating and expanding minority population during these centuries, assimilating various features of the new cultures that they encountered while searching for better, flatter agricultural land with a plentiful water supply. Their migration provoked conflicts and wars with others, which in turn moulded Tai social organisation around a core of trained fighting units. The new Tang annals, which praise the 40,000 fighting men who inhabited Śrī Canāśapūra (Sri Thep) and Xiu Luo Fen (a state west of Zhen La), say that they were excellent warriors.

Wen Dan's Rôle in the 751–4 Nan Zhao Campaign

In 753, a prince of Wen Dan led the embassy to China. He was a son of the Wen Dan king, and the emperor received him in an audience, together with his twenty-six officers. The title Brave Military Commanders (*guo yi du wei*) was bestowed on them, because the prince and his men had arrived on a mission to assist the Chinese in the war against Nan Zhao in Yunnan (CFYG 971: 19 and Song edition, p. 12; CFYG 975: 22 and Song edition, p. 14; XTS 222C).

From the viewpoint of the Chinese court, the assistance of skilled warriors, even from a distant southern land, must have been especially welcome during this troubled period. Although the long reign of Xuan Zong (712–56) marked a high point of prosperity in the Tang dynasty, the government suffered a series of defeats in the final years of the reign. During the 750s, conflicts arose not only on the south-west frontier (the Nan Zhao campaign) but also in the north-east and west of the empire. And in 756, the year after the Wen Dan forces returned home, rebels captured the imperial capital, Chang-an, and forced the court to flee. Given these circumstances, it should not be surprising that the tribute mission and the contingent of warriors from Wen Dan were so well received.

It seems likely that the previous Wen Dan envoy, who led the

mission with the rhinoceroses three years earlier, returned home bearing the news about China's conflict with Nan Zhao and a Chinese demand for soldiers to reinforce the Chinese army. The king of Wen Dan responded promptly, almost as if he had been waiting for such a chance, and he sent soldiers to join the forces of He Lu Guang, who was the Chinese governor in Jiaozhou (present-day Hanoi).

Wen Dan's readiness to enter a war seems surprising. Wen Dan acted in a friendly manner, as though it were a close ally of Tang China—even as though it were a part of the empire (comparable with an extension of the provincial government of Jiaozhou)—and thus obedient to any order from the Tang court. Wen Dan must have possessed a courageous fighting force with skilled commanders. This military expedition was an episode in its history that accords with the success of later Tai kingdoms, which had rice farmers who could instantly be transformed into soldiers once an order was given. At the same time, the prince and his commanders served as a team of able diplomats. They were received in audience by the most powerful man on earth, who bestowed honorary titles on them before they went to war.

The military campaign under the general command of the Jiaozhou governor began in 751. The Wen Dan contingent remained in China during a lull in the campaign and joined the fighting when the campaign resumed in 754. They were then allowed to return home. The Wen Dan soldiers were sent as volunteers, to whom the Chinese authorities had to give titles and gifts. There seems to be no other instance of South-East Asians joining Chinese forces in a military action of this kind during the Tang era, and perhaps there is no similar case in any other era.

Wen Dan, 771

One episode in Wen Dan's short-lived relationship with China is especially noteworthy. In 771, the Wen Dan embassy—led by the heir apparent, Po Mi[32]—brought eleven trained elephants to present to the emperor. The envoy was entertained at a state dinner in the emperor's palace, together with a party of twenty-five other people from his kingdom (CFYG 965: 7; CFYG 976: 4 and Song edition,

p. 4; XTS 222C). The dinner took place on the *yi you* day in the eleventh month—that is, 13 December 771. The emperor himself gave an honourable Chinese personal name to the viceroy and bestowed high status on him with the title Special Supreme Regional Commander (*kaifu yitongsansi*). CFYG, however, refers to Po Mi only as the 'king' (*wang*) of Wen Dan.

According to a Song-era text on Yunnan, *Ji Gu Dian Shuo Yuan Ji*, this title was once bestowed on a pro-Chinese king of Nan Zhao, Pi Luo Ge, apparently in 735. It conferred a status higher than that of any minister in the Tang capital. It was on a level that had formerly been attained by only six chief ministers in China during the Tang dynasty, and it was equal in status to the second-generation imperial princes, who were only one level lower than the emperor's sons (Pelliot 1903: 667–668). This position was the second of the thirty tiers of the Chinese bureaucratic hierarchy. By comparison, most regional governors were ranked at only the fourth, sixth or seventh tier. For this reason, Po Mi had a higher position and a greater stipend than the Chinese governors of Jiaozhou, Guangzhou or any other provinces in China (Tsukiyama 1961). How he gained this status with such an income is a mystery. It may have been a reward for the valuable military services rendered in the 750s, but this intriguing question remains open to future scholarly investigation.

STATUS OF WOMEN

The status of women in the heartland of South-East Asia thirteen centuries ago merits further consideration in the light of the records about the 771 embassy. Another extraordinary feature of Po Mi's mission is the fact that he was accompanied by his wife. This instance of a consort being allowed to travel with a tribute mission and to visit the Tang court is unique.

The consort who accompanied Po Mi could have been the real ruler of his homeland, because a matriarchal family system existed in this region before the arrival of the earliest Tai migrants. As late as the thirteenth century, Lavo sent tribute to China jointly with a

place called the 'Land of Women' (Nu Ren *guo*). The official history of Yunnan Province—*Yunnan Zhi*, also called the *Man Shu* and available in an English translation (*Man Shu* 1961)—states that there was a land of women in the Mekong valley, too. The *Yunnan Zhi* record dates from the ninth century and was written in Chinese-controlled Vietnam.

Under the system that has been perpetuated until the present day in the Mekong region, the youngest married daughter inherits her parent's home—whether a small hut or palacial residence—together with adjacent land and some paddy fields. The daughter's husband becomes the temporal managing male in the next generation, but in his old age, the same pattern recurs in the inheritance of the family home. His sons will have to live elsewhere, because his youngest daughter will inherit the house and land.

In former times, the king, heir apparent, princes and military commanders may have been active but temporary figures *managing* the country, whereas the women may have been the heirs and *possessors* of the land. As the well-known Minangkabau culture in Indonesia illustrates, the men of a matriarchal society tend to migrate away from and later back to the ancestral lands of their women, and this tendency to migrate temporarily seems to hold true especially if the land is difficult to till. Other factors may have prompted or accelerated such movements by the men. For example, rulers who became deprived of their revenues from trade or who were suffering from declining political fortunes might well move away and take their peasants with them, to found a new town elsewhere. Or they could simply seize and occupy someone else's territory, if they had well-trained soldier-farmers to fight for them. In either case, the migration then became permanent.

CHANGE IN CHINESE POLICY AND FINAL WEN DAN TRIBUTE MISSION

By the decade of the 790s, China's policy towards its valuable province in the middle-Mekong region had changed. In 791 Changzhou (or Tangzhou)—the Chinese prefecture on the

Mekong—seems to have passed under the control of Huanzhou—the major prefectural center on the coast of the South China Sea. Thereafter, Huanzhou assumed responsibility for overseeing the affairs of the outlying non-Chinese peoples in this region. It is also possible that Changzhou was simply abandoned as a Chinese administrative centre. Unfortunately, the documentation on Changzhou is sparse, and there are no clues to its fate. In Yunnan Province, the Chinese were victorious in a military campaign against Nan Zhao in 793. Those battles are well documented in the annals, but there is no record of any assistance rendered by Wen Dan at that time. The ruler of Wen Dan did not repeat the military aid rendered so successfully only forty years earlier.

The last tribute mission from Wen Dan arrived in 798 at Chang-an (CFYG 976: 6–7 and Song edition, p. 4; XTS 222C). This occasion seems to have been Wen Dan's final gesture to maintain a favoured position. The Wen Dan envoy's name is recorded in Chinese style using three characters: Li Tou Ji (Lei Tau Kap). On this occasion he was given a title that meant Guardian (or Defender) of the Imperial Palace (*zhong lang jiang*) in its original Han-period Chinese context. The application of this title had slowly changed over the centuries since the Han era, however, from Chinese regional commanders to non-Chinese. In the context of late-eighth-century Wen Dan, it denoted a general of the army or a regional chief who had the privilege of residing in or possessing his own palace or residence.

It is tempting to suppose that the king of Wen Dan, when planning his diplomatic strategy in 798, chose as his envoy a member of the Li clan, who could also have been a descendant of the pro-Chinese house of Po Mi. The clan name Li was common among the Tai-speaking peoples, and the Li were prominent in Guangxi Province and elsewhere in south China.[33] As a Li, the envoy could have conversed with senior Tang officials on the subject of his clan name and his clan's supposed origins among the Tang imperial princes of the same name. His given name, Tau Kap, sounds like the name of a Lao king or prince in Luang Prabang, during the period when the Lao kingdom was called Siang Dong and Siang Thòng. Indeed, a king whose title is similar to this name is listed among the later rulers of this kingdom.

Do the Tang-period records contain any toponyms that refer to sites in or near modern Vientiane and Luang Prabang? Although the research for the present study has unearthed insufficient information to provide a definitive answer to this question, it can be addressed very tentatively. Some likely candidates have already been mentioned above.

South of the upper-Mekong He Ling (which was in the area of modern Sipsòng Panna) was an important state called Duo Mo Chang. According to the Chinese records, travel through Duo Mo Chang territory was more difficult in an east-west direction than in a north-south one. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore that this state encompassed two or three valleys with navigable rivers bounded by mountain ranges, all of which ran from north to south, thereby making east-west travel relatively difficult. This description fits the geographic features of Lan Na (modern northern Thailand). Duo Mo Chang probably encompassed the Yom and Nan Rivers, together with some tributaries of the Mekong across the watershed.

A traveller setting out from Jiaozhou (present-day Hanoi) could go by way of Lin Yi (Champa, the coastal state in central Vietnam) and eventually reach Duo Mo Chang. Along the way between Lin Yi and Duo Mo Chang, this westward journey took the traveller successively through three states: (1) Jun Na Lu, (2) Du He Lu and (3) Sa Lu. One clue to the sites of these three states is provided by the final Chinese character of the names, which is identical in all three. In modern Mandarin, *lu* sounds almost exactly like the Daic term *lü*, which refers to the upper reaches of the Mekong. This character may have been appended to the names to indicate that they were up-river states—that is, they were in the Mekong valley above China's Changzhou prefectural centre.[34] Taking into consideration the geographical features of the region, the following tentative reconstructions can be suggested, to help in the identification of the Tai names represented by the Chinese characters for these three little states.

The first name, Jun Na Lu, is rendered Gwan Na Lou in Cantonese. The elements *na lou* could well mean literally 'Lao

paddy-fields' (*na lao* in modern Tai). The *gwan* element could have any of three or more meanings. It could mean a 'sovereign' or at least a local ruler with some independence. (The thirteenth-century Tai equivalent, *khun*, is mentioned above.) Or, the *gwan* element in the name could have the same simple meaning as the modern Tai for a 'province' or 'area' (*khwaen*). Given the position of the name of this state in the Chinese list—which implies that it was up-river from and also the closest of the three to the prefectural seat—a likely site is the area of Sakon Nakhòn Province. If this interpretation is correct, the *gwan* element might refer to the large marsh in the province, which may once have been a natural lake (*kwan* in Tai).

The second place name, Du He Lu, is rendered Dou Hoh Lou in Cantonese. It could originally have been a river landing with a name such as Tha Hua Lū, meaning 'up-river landing'. It may have been in the vicinity of modern Tha Bò and Wiang Khuk, opposite the sites of the future Sai Fòng and Vientiane.[35]

The third place name, Sa Lu, is rendered Sat Lou in Cantonese. It could have been in the Luang Prabang area or possibly in the area of the ancient trade route that linked Phrae (in the upper Chao Phraya basin) to Chiang Khan (on the Mekong). The final *t* in the Cantonese pronunciation is a minor problem, since many examples of the disappearance of this final consonant are known in Tang-period sources. The resulting name, Sa Lou, could refer to indigenous tribal groups, known generically in recent centuries as the Kha.[36] Thus, the name Sa Lou could have been a Chinese attempt to pronounce the name of the Khamu kingdom of Sawa—the elusive northern 'Java' that appears in later Khmer and Thai inscriptions.[37] This may have been the kingdom that eventually came to be known by a Lao name—Siang Dong and Siang Thòng—and was the precursor of the Lao kingdom of Luang Prabang.

THRESHOLD OF A NEW ERA

A new era ran concurrently with the final years of Wen Dan and then diachronically followed the disappearance of Wen Dan. This was the era of Du Po ('Java'). Two states known as 'Java' existed in

the Mekong basin: one in the upper reaches of the river and the other in the lower part of the basin. Definitely neither was located in Indonesia, contrary to the suppositions of past historians. Pelliot was aware of this problem when he wrote that 'the name Java seems to have existed on the upper Mekong, and M. Finot found it in a Cham inscription' (Pelliot 1904: 320). Furthermore, the southern He Ling had another name—Du Po—according to the new Tang annals

Even today, villages and towns with identical names exist not just in a single country but even in the same province or district. There is no reason to deny that two or more places—including He Ling, Pan Pan and Champa—were once called 'Java', because different adjectives could have been added to the names to distinguish between them when necessary. A Chinese monk-traveller, for example, reported that one such place was known as Maha Champa, presumably to distinguish it from the other Champa.

Pelliot and his followers did not perceive that the toponyms recorded in Tang-period Chinese records could be identified with sites in the Mekong basin, perhaps because they were not in touch with ordinary Lao villagers and thus had no opportunity to learn from living in the Lao milieu. They also did not have the present-day advantage of the wealth of archaeological data that has come to light in the course of the twentieth century.

Wen Dan vanished from the Chinese historical records at the end of the eighth century. In the present reinterpretation of the sources, however, Wen Dan's successors were standing at the threshold of a new era for the Tai-speaking peoples of South-East Asia.

LIST OF CHINESE CHARACTERS FOR NAMES CITED IN THE TEXT

跋	Ba
半支跋	Ban Zhi Ba
参半	Can Ban
冊府元龜	Ce Fu Yuan Gui
長	Chang
長安	Chang An
長/裳州	Chang Zhou
乘悟	Cheng Wu
大海	Da Hai
大唐西域求法高僧傳	Da Tang Xiyi Qiufa Gaosong Zhuan
大唐西域記	Da Tang Xiyi Ji
大越史記全書	Dai Viet Suky Toanthu
道明	Dao Ming
都督府	Dudu Fu
都訶盧	Du He Lu
獨和羅	Du He Luo
都護府	Duhu Fu
闍婆	Du/She Po
墮和羅	Duo He Luo
墮和羅鉢底	Duo He Luo Ba Di
多降	Duo Long
多摩莨	Duo Mo Chang
墮婆登	Duo Po Deng
扶南	Fu Nan

甘畢	Gan Bi
干支弗	Gan Zhi Fu
臈	Ge/La
哥羅舍分	Ge Luo She Fen
古郎洞	Gu Lang Dong
訶陵	He Ling
環王	Huan Wang
驩州	Huan Zhou
吉蔑	Ji Mie
迦羅舍分	Jia Luo She Fu
交州	Jiao Zhou
兢迦河	Jing Jia He
舊唐書	Jiu Tangshu
拘婁蜜	Ju Lou Mi
君那盧	Jun Na Lu
林邑	Lin Yi
陸眞臘	Lu Zhen La
馬留	Ma Liu
摩臘	Mo La
南海	Nanhai
南蠻	Nanman
南詔	Nan Zhao
內城	Neicheng
耨陀亘	Nou Tuo Huan/Xuan
盤盤	Pan Pan
驃	Piao

婆岸	Po An
婆風	Po Feng
婆利	Po Li
婆鏤	Po Lou
婆羅提跋	Po Luo Ti Ba
乾陀亘	Qian Tuo Huan/Xuan
千支弗	Qian Zhi Fu
日落	Riluo
薩盧	Sa Lu
舍跋若	She Ba Ruo
社婆	She Po
石密	Shimi
太平寰宇記	Taiping Huanyu Ji
太平御覽	Taiping Yulan
唐	Tang
唐會要	Tang Huiyao
棠州	Tang Zhou
投和	Tou He
投和羅	Tou He Luo
徒里拙	Tu Li Zhuo
越史略	Viet Su Luoc
外城	Waicheng
韋皐	Wei Gao
文單	Wen Dan
文陽	Wen Yang
霧温	Wu Wen

西南海	Xi Nanhai
縣	Xian
新唐書	Xin Tangshu
修羅分	Xiu Luo Fen
玄宗	Xuan Zong
元和郡縣圖志	Yuanhe Junxian Tuzhi
占	Zhan
瞻博	Zhan Bo
瞻婆	Zhan Po
旃陀越摩	Shan Tuo Yue Mo
眞臘	Zhen La
眞鵠	Zhen Ge/La
眞里富	Zhen Li Fu
質多斯那	Zhiduosina
朱波	Zhu Bo
朱江	Zhu Jiang

NOTES

1. The Chinese may also have used the name Pan Pan in reference to a site in the Mekong delta, although the latter identification is not yet certain.

2. My interest in the Tang-period Chinese records concerning Wen Dan originated in a discussion with Lao friends one evening in Vientiane during the 1960s. The central question under discussion was why some Chinese people use the sounds of the letters *l* and *n* interchangeably. We reached no conclusion, but the question intrigued me. I postulated that the southern Chinese might have had the same habit in their pronunciation a millenium and more ago. Some results of this line of reasoning are incorporated in the arguments given in this study.

3. In Cantonese, Zhan Bo becomes Dzim Bohk. The character *zhan* is definitely a variant (if not an earlier form) of the character *zhan* used for Champa. For example, *Da Tang Xi Yu Qiu Fa Gao Song Zhuan* uses a name with the same Chinese characters (*zhan bo* or *zhan bo fu*) for the country (Champa) that was south of Jiaozhou (the Tang-era province with its capital at present-day Hanoi). The seventh-century Buddhist monk Cheng Wu died in Zhan Bo on his way back to Jiaozhou, after residing in He Ling and other places farther south.

4. All these combinations seem to be shortened and variant forms of the original, complete name: hypothetically Duo He Luo Ba Di, although such a combination is never encountered in the section of the annals on Dvaravati.

5. According to the new Tang annals, Śrī Canāśapūra was south of Nan Hai. The name Nan Hai does not mean 'southern seas' (*les mers du Sud*), as the French incorrectly translated it, but rather the portion of mainland South-East Asia that lies to the south of the Red River basin (in northern Vietnam) and Nan Zhao (in China's Yunnan Province).

6. Perhaps also belonging to this tradition is the Zhen Li Fu that appears in Chinese records of the Sung dynasty (960–1275).

7. The Chinese name for Zhan Bo—also rendered as 'inland Champa'—resembles that of well-known coastal Champa. But its inhabitants were apparently either a different branch of Cham or perhaps not ethnically Cham at all.

8. Wen Dan was known as Man Dahn or Man Sim or Man Sin in Cantonese, and also as Bun Tan or Bun Sen in Sino-Japanese.

9. Huan Wang is the Tang Chinese name for Champa, which once encompassed much of the central part of modern Vietnam. From the early

centuries of the Christian era until modern times apparently, the Cham were generally called 'Mloi'. The new Tang annals (XTS 222C) record that the people of Huan Wang called themselves Ma Liu (Ma Lau). Rhodes (1651) identified the Mloi as the people of the Cham kingdom. The initial *m* has disappeared from modern Vietnamese pronunciation, and the Vietnamese today call them 'Loi'. The original name is a cognate of *malayu* (for 'Malay'). Lao Nyôi (Nhôi) and Nyo (Nho) could be other cognates.

10. An early appearance of the name 'Lavo' can be discerned in the Chinese character *nou*, which is pronounced *nau* in Cantonese. Thus if we attempt to reconstruct a full name for Tang-era Lopburi, it might have been Lavo Chandahan or something similar. The Cantonese pronunciation of Qian Tuo Huan is Goh Toh Wun (or Kin Toh Wun), which is possibly a rendering of an Indianised name such as 'Candapura' or 'Kandapura'. (In this case, the element *pura* could also be rendered in one of its alternate forms: *buri* or *bun*.) But the problem of the use of the Chinese term *huan* (rather than *fen*) for the South and South-East Asian suffix *pura* is not resolved here.

11. In fact, the characters *dan* and *can* can be rendered in other ways. The character *dan* can also be pronounced *shan* or *chan* in Mandarin. The character *can* can be pronounced *shen* or *cen*. Note that *dan* can be pronounced *sin* or *sim* or *dahn* in Cantonese.

12. Man Sem might also be rendered as Man Sham, although I acknowledge other possibilities such as Man Sim.

13. In Cantonese, this name is pronounced Sam Bun, and possibly it was a smaller Tai state whose capital city bore the suffix *bun* in Tai or *pura* in Sanskrit. Once again, the character for *can* could be pronounced *sem* or *sham*. A reference in the new Tang annals says that Can Ban was north-west of Wen Dan.

14. According to Mahendravarman's Sanskrit inscriptions, he was known as Chitrasena prior to coming to the throne. In the Sui annals, he is called Zhiduoxianna, which is the Chinese rendering of the name Chitrasena. It should be noted that the toponyms Zhen La and Can Ban are likewise Chinese renderings of local toponyms and appear only in Chinese sources. No inscription has been found that records the name used by Can Ban's inhabitants for their state.

15. It is tempting to think that the toponymn known as Po An to the Chinese still survives in the name Phon, which is a district in modern Khòn Kaen Province and perpetuates the name of the old provincial town in that area. The Cantonese pronunciation of the name is Ngohn but does not present any problem in this regard, since the *ng* in the Cantonese could

have disappeared. The name could be derived from a Sanskritic word adopted into Tai.

16. A journey of ten days, starting in Ju Lou Mi and going towards the south, brought a traveller to Po Li (Poh Lei), which has long been misidentified as a site in modern Indonesia. Pelliot (1904) thought Po Li was the island of Bali in the Indonesian archipelago, because the records specify that it was east of the southern He Ling. His reasoning was based on his assumption that the southern He Ling was the island of Java. In this identification, Coedès followed Pelliot, and all others followed Coedès. Given the evidence available today, their conclusions are obviously untenable.

An important clue to the site of Po Li—and, by association, the site of southern He Ling—is provided by the name Po Li itself. This name can be linked to the Lü (Tai Lü or Dai) people, who live along the uppermost stretches of the Mekong, in the region known as Sipsòng Panna. The term *lü* means 'upper reaches'. (It could be a cognate of *ulu*, *hulu* and other terms in Austronesian languages, and thus a remnant of an archaic Austric vocabulary.) Tai has another word with the opposite meaning: *khòm*, which refers to 'lower reaches'. The latter term corresponds to the Khmer term *krom*. One group of people in Isan are known as Khmer *lü* ('upper Khmer'), and they refer to the Khmer of Cambodia as the Khmer *krom* ('lower Khmer'). The Khmer of Phnom Penh, in their turn, refer to the Khmer who live in Vietnamese territory as Khmer *krom*, because the latter live farther down in the lower reaches of the Mekong. In the Tang period, the Chinese used three characters to write the name of the southernmost people of the middle Mekong basin. Given these considerations, the site of the southern He Ling (Hoh Ling) state becomes obvious: it was in present-day southern Cambodia and must have been south of Phnom Penh.

The letter *p* in Po Li can be voiced as a *b* and could have survived in the latter form to the present day. The *l* in the name could originally have been a southern *r* sound. Hence Po Li (in Cantonese, Poh Lei), if rendered in a South-East Asian language, might have been pronounced *bo rei*, which is identical to a modern Cambodian place-name element (*borey* in the French romanisation).

17. XTS (222C) and CFYG (957: 7) state that the king of Water (*Shui*) Zhen La resided in a city named Po Lou Ti Ba (or Dai Bat), from which one might venture to reconstruct a Sanskritic hybrid: Pura Thep. This hypothetical name, like Krung Thep (the Sanskritic-Thai name for Bangkok), literally means 'City of Celestial Beings'.

18. In 1976 I proposed (Hoshino 1976) to identify Wen Dan with the

Isan site known today as Fa Daet. The great boundary (*sema*) stones at this site, erected to mark the sacred precincts of a Buddhist monastery, provide evidence of a flourishing Buddhist society.

19. The name of Gan Bi's king is recorded in the new Tang annals as Zhan Tuo Yue Mo. (The Chinese character *yue* could be corrupt, however, and this syllable may have been pronounced *ba* instead.) Based on the sounds of this name, one way of Indianising it is 'Candabima'. The last two characters (*yue mo*) could be a Chinese rendering of the familiar element *var man*, which suffixed the names of great Khmer kings such as Suriyavarman and Jayavarman. Hence an alternative Indianised form would be 'Candravarman'.

20. The 750 reference in the historical encyclopaedia records the name of this state as 'Zhen Ge'. This record is apparently a writing or printing mistake for 'Zhen La'. Pelliot (1904) suggested the name might be derived from Land Zhen La and Wen Dan. He gave no clear reason for this hypothesis but merely observed that the historical encyclopaedia *Tang Hui Yao* does not treat the two Zhen La states separately.

21. These scholars adopt the view of some late-nineteenth-century European orientalists, however, and identify Wen Dan with Vientiane.

22. The character for Tang is replaced by the character for Chang in some texts, such as *Tai Ping Huan Yu Ji* (vo. 171). This Changzhou is identifiable with another Changzhou, mentioned immediately after it in the same volume but with a different character for the *chang* element. These two *chang* probably are Chinese transcriptions of the Daic word for 'elephant'. The modern Lao is *sang*, as in the name Lan Sang.

23. The Tang Ming kingdom of the Wu era (AD 222–80) was one of three countries that Chinese officials visited. (The other two were the better known Lin Yi and Fu Nan.) 'Tang' could be derived from an early Austro-Asian word for a 'big river'. It is also plausible that the indigenous name was something like T'meng and that the meaning of the word was 'lower basin'. The latter hypothetical reconstruction sounds similar to the final two syllables of Si Khotthabòng, which is another rendering of the name Si Khotthabun by which the Lao kingdom was known in legendary times.

24. Lou Lun has been explained in terms of the Kui vocabulary in my detailed Tai history in Japanese (Hoshino 1990). The explanation could also have been made with a So or Thavung dictionary, if either were available.

25. Some examples are Mendong and Mengdong, in the Indonesian *wayang* stories, and Magelang, Malang and Minang, as well as the Daic term *müang*. *Dong* is an ancient Tai word meaning a canal or a natural

waterway (the modern *khlòng*), referring in this instance to the Mekong. The same term is *gohng* in Cantonese, *jiang* in Mandarin, *stung* in Khmer and either *thong* or *song* in Vietnamese. A similar progression of related words for 'mountain' can likewise be demonstrated: *loi*, *doi*, *nui* and so on. By drawing attention to vocabulary that is obviously related across languages, South-East Asian history can be analysed from a more organic perspective.

26. It is not known when the sacred stupa, the That Phanom, was originally constructed on the riverbank near present-day Nakhòn Phanom. According to art historian Jean Boisselier (1965), the monument was rebuilt at the end of the ninth century or the beginning of the tenth century. The present account, however, is concerned with a much earlier period: the seventh and eighth centuries.

27. The various renderings of the name for the mountain (*wu*, *mou* and *vu*) correspond closely to the Tai term *phu* meaning 'mountain'. The continuation of the description of the itinerary is full of Tai words.

28. The name Li Li, which may have been recorded somewhat inaccurately by the Chinese, sounds like the simple Tai expression *di di*, meaning 'very fine' or excellent'.

29. In modern Tai dialects, *suan tai* means 'Tai gardens and orchards'. If this was the eighth-century meaning of this toponym, it would be the earliest known appearance of the word 'Tai' in the historical records of the middle Mekong basin. The same name could, however, have been in use in Vietnam or in China before the seventh or eighth centuries.

30. Evidence of a link between Wen Dan and Kutchi Narai is provided by the numerous boundary (*sema*) stones discovered in Kutchi Narai, which are similar to the great boundary stones found in Fa Daet, Wen Dan's outer capital.

31. The character for *jiang* in Zhu Jiang (Dzy Gohng in Cantonese) may be corrupt. It means 'river', and its left-hand radical is identical to that of *bo*, which means 'wave'. This toponym may in fact refer to Zhu Bo, an old name for the Pyu empire. The Ping and Wang River valleys seem to have been under its control from time to time. During the Tang era, Zhu Bo (or Zhu Zhang) was renamed Piao (Pyu).

32. The viceroy's name as recorded by the Chinese was Po Mi, which sounds like a simple Tai name. (*Mi* literally means 'to have' or 'to be wealthy'.) This name seems to be prefixed by the Daic term *pò*, which literally means 'father' but is used also in reference to a married man. Thus the name recorded by the Chinese may in fact be a kind of title plus a personal name. The *pò* element may, over the course of several centuries,

have evolved into the now-familiar, but still simple, Tai term for a king or independent ruler found in thirteenth-century inscriptions: *phò khun*.

33. Schafer (1970), in a book on Hainan Island during the Tang era, even went as far as asserting that Vietnam's imperial family, the Le dynasty (981–1009), was ethnically Daic.

34. On the other hand, the Cantonese pronunciation (*lou*) could have been a Chinese rendering of the names of the important ethnic groups in the upper Mekong basin, all of which sound similar: Lwa, Lawa and Lao.

35. If this supposition is correct, the origin of the modern name Tha Bò can possibly be found in the term *bo*, which appears as a toponym in various parts of Yunnan and Vietnam. Both *bo* (a pre-Tai word) and *tha* (a Tai word in current usage) mean a 'river landing' or 'port'. The change in usage of such words—and their juxtaposition—is illustrated by the modern name for the Si River in central Isan. The river is known in Lao and Thai as the Mae Nam Si. All three elements of this name have identical meanings (i.e., 'river'), although they come from three different sources: *mae* (Thai), *nam* (Lao) and *si* (Austronesian, called Hesperonesian by some linguists). The early Tai-speaking people might similarly have adopted the new term *tha* in conjunction with, and later in place of, the older term *bo*.

36. It should be remembered that all Tai-related ethnic groups in China refer to the Han Chinese by names such as Kha, Ka and Xa, meaning a powerful outsider or overlord. In ancient South-East Asia, the term applied to Austro-Asiatic overlords. In modern Vietnamese, the term is written *xa* (referring to indigenous tribes). In the dialect of the Lü (the Tai or Dai of Sipsòng Panna) it is *bò* or *sò* (referring to the Chinese).

37. The link between Sawa (also pronounced Sua) and Java is obvious to anyone who reads Tai scripts and also knows that the Tai letters *s* and *w* correspond, respectively, to the Sanskrit letters *j* and *v*. Hence the word that is pronounced *sawa* in Tai can also be romanised (in the Sanskritic form) as *java*.